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SUBJECT: GUINEA: FRANCE BELIEVES JOYANDET MISSION SECURED
KEY COMMITMENTS;GIVES JUNTA "BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT" FOR NOW

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Young, 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The GOF believes that it obtained firm commitments on key issues from coup leader Camara during Secretary of State (Cooperation and Francophonie) Joyandet's January 3-4 visit to Conakry. These commitments include holding elections before the end of 2009, no running for office by members of the military, and the emplacement of a civilian government. On this basis France has in effect given the Guinea "the benefit of the doubt," MFA Guinea desk officer Ann'laure Hare said on January 14. However, the French remain vigilant for signs of backsliding and are concerned about Camara's continuing to name government ministers rather than allowing newly installed PM Komara to do so. France has not cut its aid programs but could do so if conditions deteriorate. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Ann'laure Hare, MFA desk officer for Guinea, on January 14 discussed GOF views of Guinea in the wake of the January 3-4 visit of Alain Joyandet, Secretary of State for Cooperation and Francophonie. Hare said that Joyandet had previously scheduled a visit to Dakar and added Conakry after Conte's death and the transfer of power. She said that the Camara junta posed no obstacles to Joyandet's visit. Hare noted that France, EU President at the time, had joined with other EU members soon after Conte's death in criticizing the extra-legal seizure of power and urging a return to constitutional government and the holding of elections.

¶3. (C) In Conakry, Joyandet accomplished the important objectives of having the junta agree to three key items -- that the junta would work to organize elections before the end of 2009, that no members of the military would run for office, and that the junta would appoint a civilian government. Hare said that the GOF believed these were key elements in steering Guinea on a democratic course. Guinea's leaders also told Joyandet that they wanted to end the country's many years of political, social, and economic stagnation, and to avoid Guinea's possible slide into becoming a "narco-state."

¶4. (C) Hare agreed that, given Guinea's history and the long tenures of its two post-independence dictator-leaders, it was impossible to be certain that the junta would do the right thing. She said that Camara seemed to have a certain charisma and leadership skills, which meant that he could either be an effective leader in a transition to democracy or else become the next strong-man. Hare said that the French were, at this early stage, optimistic that he would turn out to be the former and not the latter. However, she signaled one early concern -- that Camara seemed not to be letting PM Komara appoint his own cabinet ministers and was naming them himself. Hare said that this was not a good sign and warranted continued close scrutiny.

¶5. (C) Aware that the USG had announce suspension of certain of its aid programs and that some of these had taken place through operation of law, Hare said that France had decided not to do so. In effect, "we are giving Guinea, for now, the benefit of the doubt." She added quickly that

French assistance did not amount to much -- small scale military training being one program she mentioned specifically. She said that France could use the threat of cutting aid as leverage, if necessary, to encourage the junta to stay on the right path.

¶6. (C) Hare said that France would continue to watch events in Guinea closely. She noted that there was a huge public groundswell for positive change across the board in Guinea, now that the Conte era had ended. She hoped that the Camara junta would appreciate the public's desire and use it to build momentum for constructive change.

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